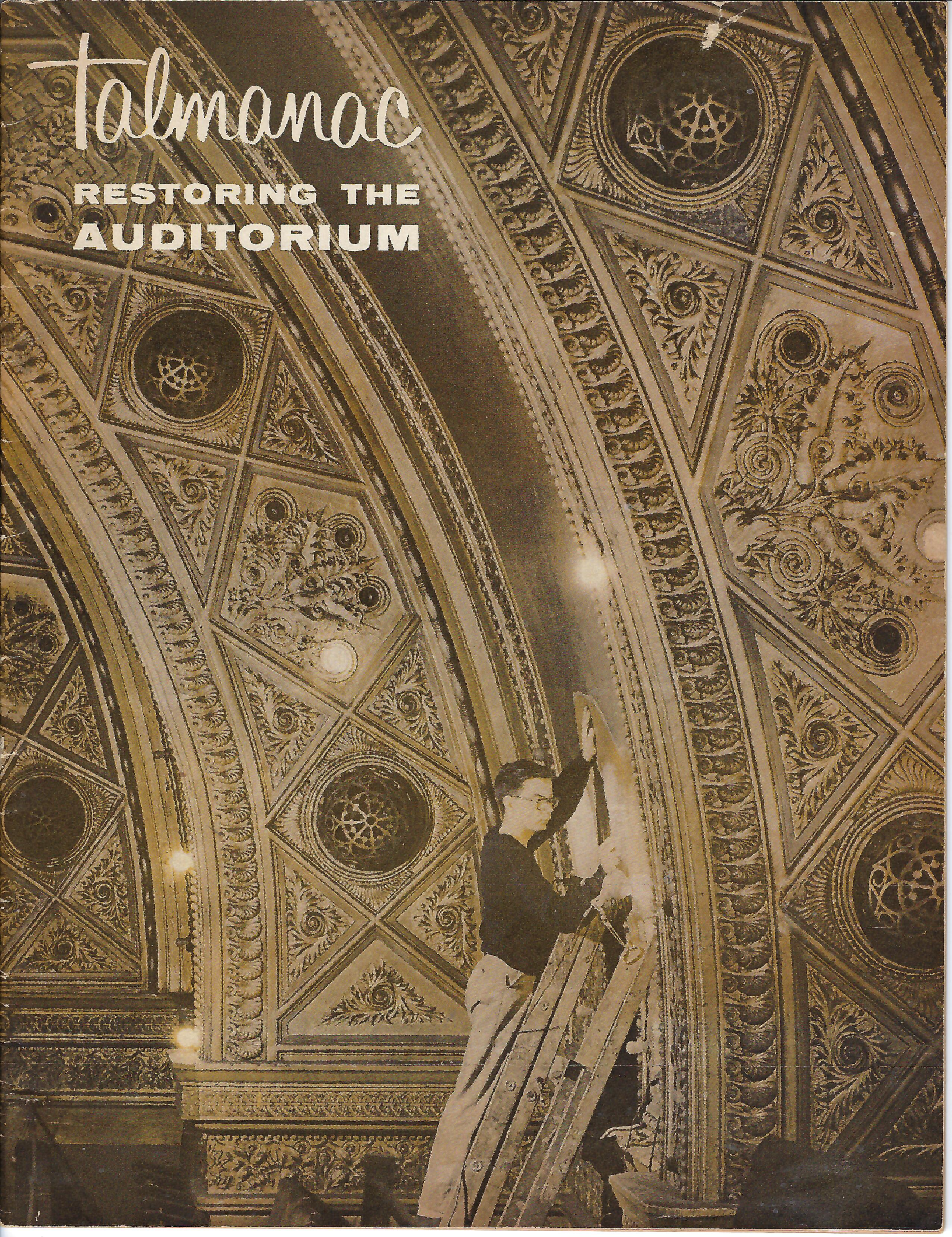
talmanac

RESTORING THE AUDITORIUM



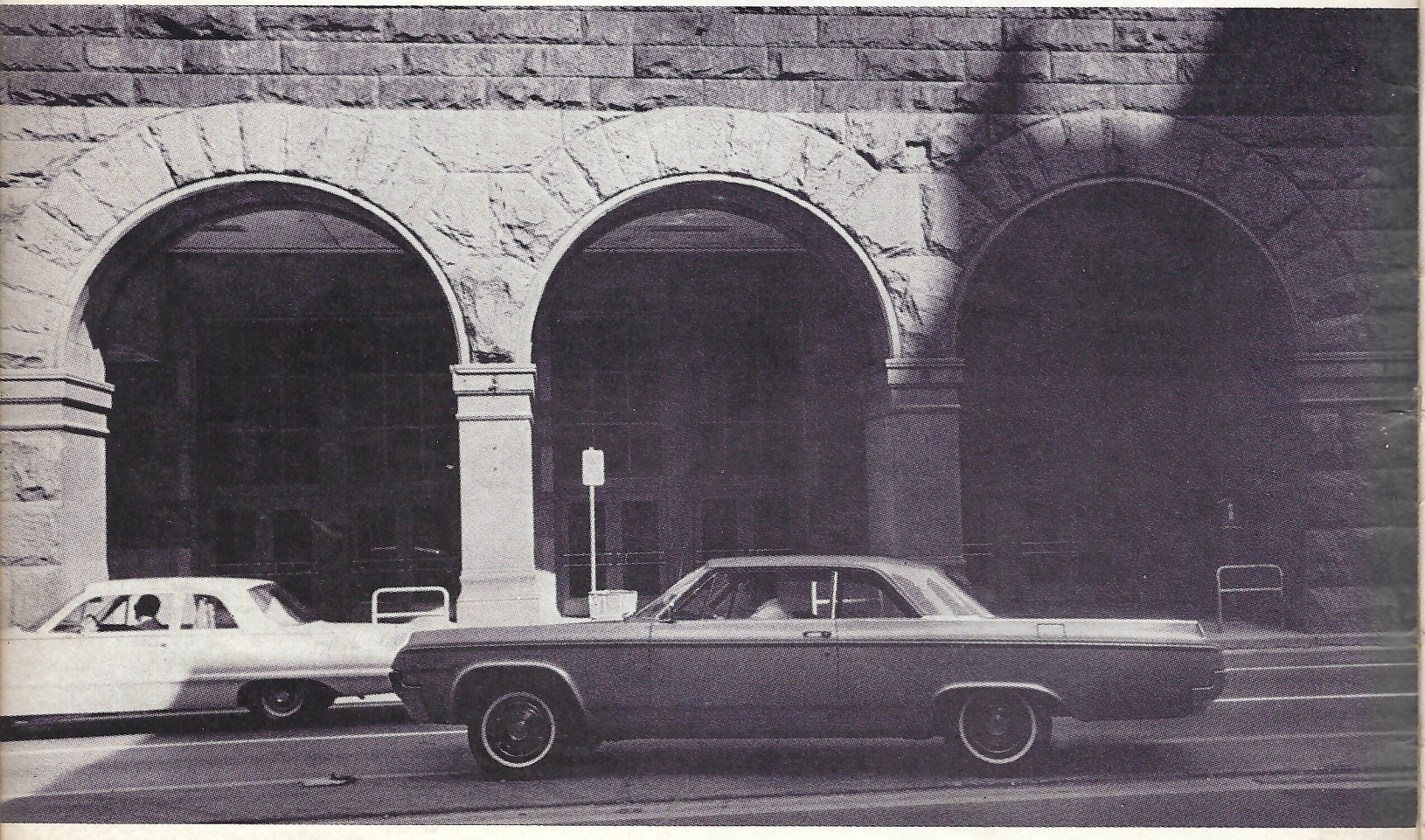
WHO CARES

about the world's greatest theater— Chicago's Auditorium?

On the north side of Congress Expressway, its dark entrance shrouded under the foot of the old granite tower, slumbers the world's greatest theater. Not the once-greatest; the greatest *now*. There is no other place on earth where so many people can see and hear full-scale opera or symphonic music in such purity as in Chicago's Auditorium. There is no other hall on earth where one man can talk to 5,000 in an ordinary voice and be heard so clearly by all without benefit of microphone or amplifier.

Thereby hangs a tale—a story of love and hate, of intrigue and betrayal and of unselfish devotion—a true story crying to be told. Within the last few years parts of the story have been

Behind these doors slumbers the world's greatest theater



COVER/Architect John Vinci, 5427 South Komensky, hunts for original stencil designs under Auditorium's several coats of paint. Photo by Richard Nickel, architectural photographer and Louis Sullivan authority. Other photos by Dick are on pages 13, 17, 22, 25, 26.

CREDITS: line drawing, page 5, Chicago Historical Society; photos on pages 8, 27, United Press International; page 12, Chicago Architectural Photo Co.; page 14, Harry Zelzer; page 29, Chicago Tribune.

told, and considerable interest stirred. Now we shall tell it all, in the hope that enough people will care to restore this priceless thing to a glory and a usefulness greater than it ever knew, for the benefit of every music-lover and theater-lover in Chicago.

I felt sure Talman would OK this story when I proposed it. To explain why, let me call the roll of Talman's senior officers—almost all of them.

Founder Ben Bohac was leading man in many church theatricals before there was a Talman. Later, he learned to play the violin, and his old friends still remember his soulful rendition of "Every Little Movement."

President Bernie Polek likes to act in amateur theatricals; he first came to fame in savings and loan circles as winner of the U.S. League's national five-minute speech contest, and he's nowhere more at home than when facing an audience.

Vice Pres. Jim Kiskaddon is almost automatically chosen master of ceremonies at any party he attends, and his impersonation of Ted Lewis has wowed 'em for at least 25 years.

Vice Pres. Ted Lownik has a fine classical baritone, is a gifted orchestral and choral conductor and is organist and choir director of his church; his wife is a concert pianist.

V.P. Charlie Jarasek plays serious clarinet; he's another speech-contest winner, too.

Ass't V.P. Eddie Palasz played clarinet and saxophone well enough to turn his Navy service into permanent assignment to a service band.

Just-retired chief appraiser Howard Ouderkirk was recently a cellist in the Northwest Suburban symphony; his wife is an accomplished organist.

Director Steve Lucas has been the impresario of an instrumental group.

Director Pete Rozdilsky is long-time tenor soloist in his church.

Treasurer Jeannette Wiehn has a classically-trained soprano.

Ass't Veep Don Dill was in my opinion one of the best Sir Joseph Porters that ever "polished up the handle of the big front door," (perhaps I think so because I taught him the role), and his wife Becky, who is organist and choir director of their church, has spark-plugged a long succession of amateur musical shows and choral concerts.

As for the writer of these lines, my wife and I have been singing together in glee clubs, church choirs, classical choruses and amateur operettas since we were kids in school, back in the twenties, and we're still at it, both in our church and in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus.

With such attitudes among my colleagues, getting approval of this project should have been duck soup, but as a matter of fact, it wasn't. The Auditorium jinx, or the gremlins, or something sinister (I've become a bit superstitious about that place) almost queered it.

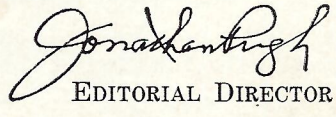
President Bernie was the one I really had to convince, and he had never been inside the Auditorium. So I made a date to meet him there and let him both see and listen. We drove separately, and arranged to meet at one of the two garages on Congress. And then, for nearly an hour, I waited for him where I thought he would be, while he, a block away, waited for me where he thought I would be. Eventually, we both called the office and made contact, but it was *not* an auspicious introduction to the Auditorium. I don't think that Bernie yet believes it was the gremlins that mixed us up. I do.

Anyhow, we got the key to the stage door, and some lights on, borrowed two flashlights, and went in. There was no time for a real exploration, only enough for the crucial test. I took him through the center door in the curtain—"Oo—it's spooky," then we plunged up a side aisle, into the back of the house, where I switched on the few dim lights I knew about; then up several flights of dusty stairs till we stood behind the last seats in the balcony, the farthest in the house from the stage. There I left him flashing his light on the cobwebs and listening to my footfalls reverberate as I went back to the stage, a block away. Then I turned and talked to him, in a normal voice. He heard me, perfectly. Then I returned to him. We put the place to sleep again and went our respective ways.

The next morning, he said yes.

Editor Bill Ball, who did the spade-work on this issue, wrote up his interviews and as much of the story as he could discover, assembled and chose the illustrations and put the magazine together, was another of our younger generation that had not the slightest idea what the Auditorium was, or where, or why anyone should care about it, when the matter was first mentioned to him. You can judge what he thinks now by what he says. Bill's an independent cuss and he won't write things "to order"—he has to tell the truth as he sees it. That he may do so is an understanding we've had between us for many years, and he holds me to it.

Let him take you inside now, and I'll be back later.



EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

A CLOAK AND DAGGER STORY

Max Nichols, building superintendent, unlocked the steel fire door and we walked onto the dimly lit stage. This was our first look at the Auditorium.

A few wall-mounted fluorescent lamps sent soft beams of light across the wooden floor. Way high above, a small light twinkled through hundreds of steel scenery rigging cables that hung down like giant harp strings. A few other lights called attention to important features of the stage such as the fire curtain, switchboard, catwalks, stairs, entrances, exits . . .

Max allowed us a few minutes to take it all in.

"Well, what do you think?" he asked.

"It's big!"

"That's what everybody says," Max laughed. "It hit me the same way the first time I saw it some thirty years ago.

"It's plenty big—bigger than most stages; about 100 feet wide, 70 deep. Roughly, the size of two city lots.

"Over a thousand people sat on this stage at the grand opening in 1889. All the really big shows used to play here: Ben Hur; the circus, elephants and all; even political conventions.

"There's plenty of space up there too," he continued, pointing to the rigging loft. "Room enough to hang scenery for seven operas; you know how elaborate some of that stuff can get.

"But there's more to this place than size. Frank Lloyd Wright said that this theater was built fifty years ahead of its time. I'll go along with that.

"Here, look," he pointed to a small cutout section of the floor. "This is one of twenty-six hydraulic lift sections that were used to create unusual stage effects . . . here's another over here and one next to it . . . they're all over and of different sizes . . .

"Some of these sections move up or down as much as eighteen feet; probably used to form hills or valleys. Others make rocking motions to simulate the action of waves . . ."

"How did they raise and lower that heavy scenery?"

"By hand. No, they weren't supermen," Max laughed. "This has the same counterweighing system found in most theaters today: balance three hundred pounds of scenery with three hundred pounds of weights at the pulling-end of the line and the scenery becomes, in effect, weightless — even a child can raise or lower it with hardly any effort.

"Remember the iron sash weights used in the old-fashioned wooden windows? Same principle.

"Now here's something really special . . ."

Max pointed to the vertical panels at both sides of the stage opening.

"These side panels and the connecting section at the top—the part that cuts across the arch—are all of a piece. The whole thing weighs five tons. It is raised and lowered hydraulically. The designers called it a reducing curtain.

"Suppose you're putting on a big opera, or choral concert—something that requires a great big stage opening? Pull a lever and this whole section disappears into the rigging loft, making the opening 75 feet wide, 40 high.

"Suppose the next show is a drama or recital, something requiring a smaller opening? Bring down the reducing curtain and the opening becomes 47 feet wide, 35 high. How's that for versatility?

"The center fire curtain, and another silk one in front of it, also operate hydraulically.

"Come on out front—I'll show you something truly ingenious."

We walked down a few stairs, past the orchestra pit, up an aisle toward the back of the theater. It was even darker out here. The few dozen small bulbs in the ceiling arches provided only slightly more light than one gets from a full moon on a summer's night. In fact, it was downright gloomy.

This didn't seem to faze Max.

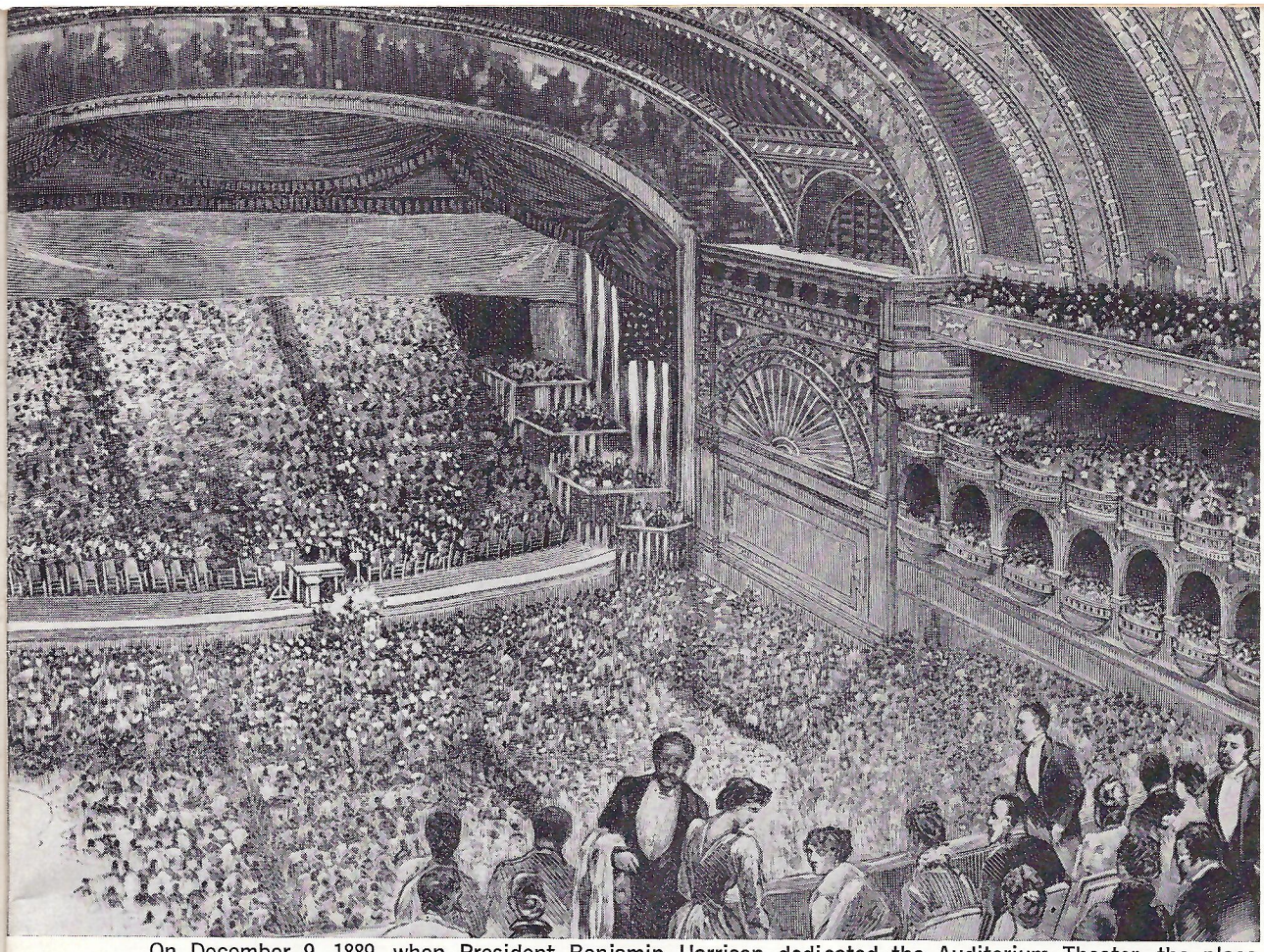
"See the two galleries way up there over the balcony? The top one is the 'peanut gallery.' Those are the cheapest and best seats in the house. That's where the real music lovers sit because it's the best place to hear music exactly as it is played and sung.

"Each gallery can be closed off completely by means of hinged steel panels located above them. When the panels are lowered they blend in with the rest of the ceiling—so much so, that if you didn't know better, you'd never dream there was anything in back of them.

"I'm told there was also a curtain located about midway up the balcony that could be closed to further reduce seating capacity."

"What was the point?"

"Flexibility, I suppose. This place holds an audience of 4,200 people: that's close to twice the seating capacity of Orchestra Hall; 700 seats more than the



On December 9, 1889, when President Benjamin Harrison dedicated the Auditorium Theater, the place was packed. More than a thousand people sat on the stage. Box seats sold for as much as $2,100.

During World War II, the stage was used as a bowling alley

Civic Opera House; about the same as the Arie Crown Theater in McCormick Place. If you shut off both galleries, seating capacity drops a thousand. Pull the curtain, it drops another seven hundred. With this flexibility, the theater could be used for a wider variety of shows and events. Remember, they had everything here from a charity baseball game to a flower show, so audience attendance varied as much as the shows."

A man came out on the stage, asked: "How long you going to be around?"

"Couple of minutes," Max answered.

"O.K." He turned and left.

"He heard you?" we asked, in disbelief. "You didn't even raise your voice. You didn't talk any louder to him than I'm talking to you right now, and we're a block away from the stage."

"You don't have to shout to be heard in this place. You don't even need microphones on the stage. This place has almost perfect acoustics; experts rate it among the best—if not the best —in the world, in this respect. Some singers and musicians consider it to be the finest theater ever built for the performance of opera."

We took a long, close look around: the flaking paint and peeling plaster on the ceiling and side walls; tarnished gold leaf decorations on the ceiling arches, the reducing curtain, along the box seats; chalk markings on the walls near the entrances "row C, aisle 3," one read; water-stains that ran from ceiling to floor in some places . . .

"How could they do it?" we asked. "How could they allow this to happen to such a great theater? What happened?"

"I don't know," Max answered solemnly. "In a sense, this place has had a 'charmed life.' Seems like people were always trying to get rid of it for some reason or other. In 1929, when the Civic Opera Company moved to the Civic Opera Building, there was talk about tearing it down. Somehow, it survived. In '39, its fiftieth anniversary was celebrated with a production of 'Leave It To Me,' starring Sophie Tucker, William Gaxton and Victor Moore. The last show to play here was 'Hellzapoppin.' After that, in '41, it was closed again.

"During the war, the building was used as a USO Center. There were a few shows here in the beginning, but most of the time it was used as a bowling alley.

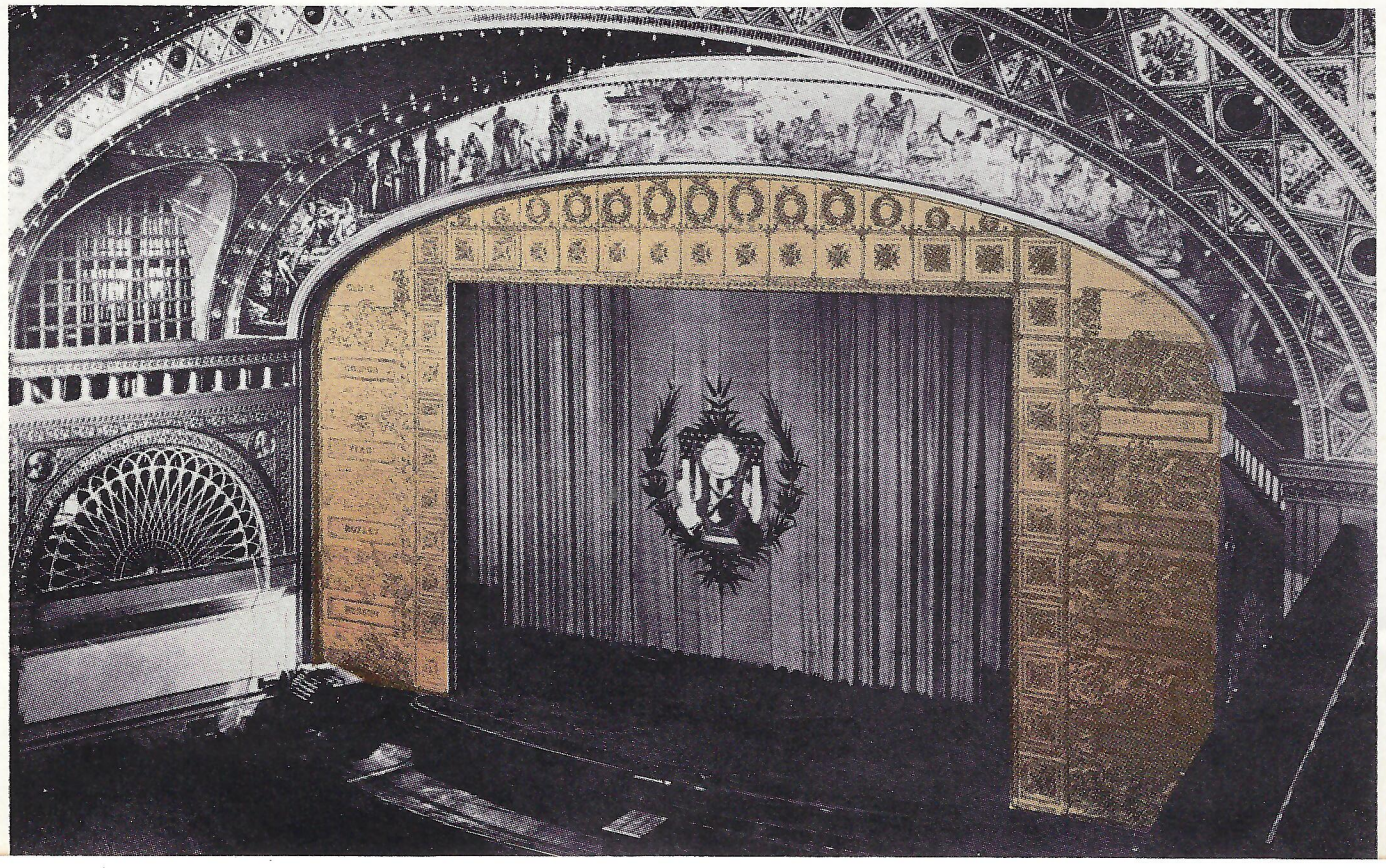
'Since then, the theater hasn't been used for anything at all."

"Max, it doesn't make sense, when you realize what's here. And yet, do you know, I've lived and worked in Chicago for over twenty years. I must have driven or walked past the corner of Michigan and Congress a hundred times, and until a month ago I never even knew there *was* a theater in this building. I'd heard some talk of the Auditorium, but I really had no idea where or what it was.

Max nodded, "I'm not surprised; it's been asleep so long."

Talk about mystery stories—the deeper one gets into this one the more mysterious it becomes.

For big operas and choral concerts, the five-ton reducing curtain (in color) can be raised making the stage opening 75 feet wide, 40 high



". . . I remember standing on that catwalk up there . . . and dropping flower petals . . ."

A stagehand remembers

Our next visit to the Auditorium was during a recording session held there by Dick Schory and his Percussion Pops Orchestra. Dick is a fanatic about sound and will go to any length in order to achieve new and unique sound effects.

When he can't get a desired effect from any of the standard musical instruments, Dick looks elsewhere for something that will get it for him: special drums; Indian taxi horns; a Chevy manifold . . . he once used an auto gear box to make a special sound he thought was needed in some Camelot music.

Dick had heard and read about the Auditorium's famous acoustics, so it seemed like a logical place in which to record a stereo album.

We listened to the orchestra from various locations—even the peanut gallery. Max is right: "It's the best place to hear music as it is played and sung." Schory sounds range from the faint pluck of a guitar string to shattering blasts from the brass section to the plink of a high piano note to the rolling thunder of drums; we heard them all . . . clear, bright and true from the last seat in the peanut gallery.

Then we went backstage to look at the sound-recording equipment. The stuff is so incredibly complicated we didn't bother the technicians. Instead, we talked to John Glickman, a stagehand. The Theatrical Stage Employees Union, Local #2, requires that one or more of its members must be present whenever a stage is being used by professionals. John is Secretary-Treasurer of the Union's Pension and Retirement Plan and has been a stagehand for more than forty years.

"I worked here for a full season in '25," John began. "What a year that was: Edith Mason, Rosa Raisa, Mary Garden . . .; The Barber of Seville, Madame Butterfly, Falstaff . . .

"Talk about memories . . . I remember standing on that catwalk up there—that's about 50 feet up—and dropping flower petals on the stage during a death scene in Falstaff, or Mefistofele, I forget which . . . funny that I should remember the rose petals and not the opera.

"Then, when silent movies played here, I helped with the

sound effects: guns, cannons, thunder rolls . . . You know how we made the sound of thunder? We threw chains down a long, metal trough from about 40 feet above; they'd rumble down gaining speed all the time, until they hit a heavy metal plate at the bottom . . . that impact was supposed to be the loud crack you get after lightning.

"In '26, when Max Reinhardt brought in his production of 'The Miracle,' we converted the stage and part of the seating section into a cathedral: seats were made into pews; we built huge Gothic arches on each side —even installed some stained glass windows in certain spots.

"That's a long time ago, but you know these cables and scenery-batten clamps seem as good as they were forty years ago—could use a little oil here and there, maybe, but, otherwise, almost as good as new.

"I've worked in theaters and halls all over the city: the Civic Opera House, Arie Crown, Schubert, Blackstone, Garrick, Tivoli . . . you name it. In my opinion, this equipment is better than that found in most theaters today, and equal to the best and newest. Take the counterweighing system, it's superior to anything I've used since.

"And I like these hydraulic lifts better than the new electric ones; these work smoother."

"Would you like to see the Auditorium back in business?" we asked.

"Would I! I'll say I would. Not because it would mean more work for me either. I'm too old now to care for a reason like that.

"Coming back here today . . . seeing what's happened to this grand old theater in the twenty years it has been shut down . . . this is one of the saddest days in my life.

"Why don't we Americans respect, love, and cherish the fine old creations that are part of our heritage? We go to Europe, knock ourselves out, spend a lot of money, to see a lot of ancient buildings and tottering ruins . . . then we come home and see our really precious buildings demolished, and we don't even lift a finger to try to stop it. Have we become a nation that only cares for new things?

"I think Chicago has come of age. I think it's time we took a good look at the things that contributed to Chicago's greatness. This place—this Auditorium—this is really worth saving. For its acoustic qualities alone, if for no other reason."

"John, you were here in '29 when the Chicago Civic Opera Company moved over to the new Civic Opera Building — what happened then? Why was the new building and theater built in the first place? And why did the opera company abandon a perfectly good theater to move to another that had really nothing more to offer than larger dressing rooms?"

"Did you ever see the Opera Building from a plane or helicopter?" John grinned. "From up there, the building looks like a huge throne. No fooling, the tower facing Wacker Drive is built just like the back of a throne, and the extensions at both sides come around just like chair arms. Insull built the Opera Building because he wanted a throne . . . a monument."

Insull wanted a throne.

A great actress speaks

There aren't many who could have done it, but Cornelia Otis Skinner stood on the Auditorium stage one day in 1960, spoke a few familiar lines from Shakespeare, and for a few moments the musty old theater became the exciting, beautiful place it must have been many years ago.

Then she went on about one of her pet peeves:

"This is the greatest argument there is against microphones and loudspeaker systems," she explained. "I'm all for eliminating them. They are the ruination of the American voice. Nobody is learning to speak anymore.

"Soon it will be that if you give a dinner party there'll be a little microphone in front of everybody's plate and all the noise from these will blast out from a horrible loud speaker in the back of the dining room. Nobody will understand anything being said.

"This is a wonderful place to make sounds in because the acoustics are so perfect. Whatever you say—right or wrong, loud or soft—is projected so everyone in the audience can hear it.

"I've trained long enough so that I don't need microphones unless I'm in some vast, 'acousticsless' place, which this is not. This is perfection.

"There's a vastness about this theater and yet an intimacy about it—an intimacy between performer and audience . . . a closeness, even to the people who sit way up in the top gallery; probably because of the combination of perfect acoustics and sightlines . . . no matter where you sit, you can see everything that happens on stage.

Cornelia Otis Skinner

"There is enough of its former magnificence visible so that I can see this place filled with glamorous people. Glamorous women with their diamond tiaras (and why shouldn't they have them), and the men with white, starched shirt fronts . . . probably carnations in their lapels . . . they are sitting in those box seats. And way up there—in the gallery—I see all the music lovers and people who love the theater.

"I see this theater as it must have been in the glittering, beautiful period of its popularity. It has dignity; the same dignity that the Paris Opera House has.

"I have a feeling my father acted here: probably when he was doing Shakespeare.

"It doesn't matter that this was used as a bowling alley during the war. Throughout history, theaters have been used for other purposes. One of the greatest theaters in Paris was used as a hospital during the war of 1870. In war time, churches and cathedrals are often used for other things, too.

"What matters is that there is magic here—the same sort of magic that happens when you see the Forum in Rome on a moonlit night. Suddenly the seats are filled with people—the ruins are no longer ruins. I think I would feel the same way about this place no matter when I came here—just so long as there is enough light. . . .

"When this is restored, I want to see it look like a theater. I don't want it all moderned up. I don't want it to look like a Miami Beach hotel.

"I want it red plush and gilt cupids, if possible. Perhaps, a chandelier—but I see it doesn't need one because it has those stunning arches that light up.

"What I mean is, that I want it to be a wonderful place where people come to feel grand—gala and full of anticipation as they face the stage, the house lights dim, the footlights go on, and there's a hush about the place . . . no matter whenever this happens in a real theatery theater, I always get a thrill, even if the play or musical that follows is awful.

"I think a theater should look like a theater; like this one does."

Good acoustics go PLUNK

We wanted to know more about acoustics so we talked to an architect.

"I can recite some theory about acoustics," he offered, "but that's all it would be, theory. We seem to have lost the ability to design theaters where performers can talk and sing without microphones. In fact, I can't think of one acoustically good theater that has been built since the invention of sound props like mikes and loudspeakers.

"Why not talk to a musician, singer, or actor—someone who appreciates the true value of good acoustics?"

"Got any suggestions?"

"Didn't Rudolph Ganz make his debut in the Auditorium? If Ganz is still around, he's the man to see. He has played in all the great theaters of the world. I don't know of anyone better qualified to give you plain talk about the importance of sound from a performer's point of view."

Dr. Rudolph Ganz is still around—very much so. President Emeritus of Chicago Musical College, he is still a member of its faculty; has a full teaching schedule, appears frequently as an artist.

A small typewritten sign on the door of his studio reads: "With proper care, the human body will last a lifetime." This light touch, plus an uncommon zest for life, has kept Ganz alert, active, productive and happy even though he's approaching his 88th birthday: this, plus plans for the future.

"Next year—in '65—my wife and I will perform at the Salz-

Bad acoustics go PLUNK, PLUNK

"If you want to know about the Auditorium's acoustics, see Rudolph Ganz," an architect suggested. "That is, if he is still around."

burg Festival. She's an accomplished singer, you know.

"In '66, we'll go to Fort Worth where I'll be one of the judges in the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

"In '67, the College will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Since the founding date and my birthday are only four days apart, the dean has suggested that we celebrate both occasions with a Ganz recital. To that I answered, 'Put me down for a harp solo.' "

We looked around at the autographed photos on the walls: Caruso, Rosa Raisa, Mary Garden, John McCormick, Paderewski, Toscanini. . . .

"I know what you are thinking," Ganz chuckled, "I go back a long, long ways. Do you know how far back? When I played with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1903, Theodore Thomas was conductor and Frederick Stock played 2nd viola."

Born in Zurich, Switzerland, Ganz made his first public appearance at the age of twelve, as a cellist; as a pianist, when seventeen. He made his professional debut in 1899, at the age of twenty-two, as piano soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The next year, his First Symphony was performed by the same orchestra, with Ganz conducting.

In 1902, he made his American debut as a concert pianist in the Auditorium.

"Dr. Ganz, do you remember anything about the Auditorium's acoustics?" we asked.

"Oh, yes. There are only two or three other theaters that can match it: Boston Symphony Hall, the Memorial Opera House in San Francisco. . . ."

"What are good acoustics?" we continued. "Does it mean that everyone in the audience can hear everything loud and clear?"

"Yes, but it's much more complicated than this. Would you believe that there are music halls where one must make allowances for distance when conducting an orchestra? Sounds from instruments located at the farthest ends of the stage take slightly longer to reach the conductor than those from the closest instruments. When this happens, one must adjust to it or the orchestra isn't playing together. Can you imagine how hard it is to play good music under these conditions?

"There's a theater in Paris where you play one note and hear two. I performed in a hall something like this in San Francisco; when I played 'plunk,' the audience heard 'plunk, plunk.'

"Since the audience heard twice, I asked the manager to pay me twice."

"If good acoustics are this rare, how do you account for our apparent indifference toward the Auditorium?" we asked.

"Perhaps it's because we have a different attitude toward cultural things than others. In Europe, for example, a theater like the Auditorium would make front page news; its acoustics would be the subject for many stories because the people want to read about such a marvel. In America, theater acoustics hardly make the entertainment page.

"New Yorkers are learning about acoustics now; Lincoln Center is horrible. They have tried all sorts of things to improve its acoustics, but nothing seems to work.

"And look at our Arie Crown Theater; I wouldn't go there even to get out of a storm."

"When the Auditorium is restored, would you like to play there?"

"No . . . no, there are other pianists now, like Van Cliburn; he should play there. But I would like to stand on the stage for just a few minutes to relive fond memories."

Some young people care

You expect certain people to get misty-eyed about the Auditorium—particularly those who remember the golden era of opera when incomparable artists such as Caruso, Amelita Galli-Curci, Mary Garden, John McCormick sang there.

But let's face it, that was a long, long time ago and there are many more people living in Chicago to whom these names—and the Auditorium—mean absolutely nothing. And yet . . . for some strange reason there are thousands of young adults, who have never set foot inside the Auditorium, who really care what happens to it. Why?

Why, for example, did thousands of secretaries, file clerks, college students, and others, respond so enthusiastically to Norman Ross's brief appeal for Auditorium restoration during a radio program a few years ago?

"I have many, many fond memories of the place," Norm recalls, "so it was a labor of love to talk a minute or so about the acoustics, some of the great artists I had heard there, and to urge listeners to get behind the restoration program. It wasn't intended as a strong sales pitch, really—there was no prepared script; I was just reminiscing . . .

"I have never seen anything like the response to this one mention on one program. In all, there were five thousand letters: some contained money—small sums, from a quarter to five dollars. But most of the letters came from young people who said, in effect: 'Look, I don't have any money to give, but I'll do anything—write letters, address envelopes, sweep floors, scrape paint off the walls . . . anything—please let me help.' "

We talked to a girl who cares very much about what happens to the Auditorium. She may typify some of the young people who wrote to Norman. Here's her story:

"Five years ago the Auditorium meant nothing to me; I had more important things to think about. But, an unusual school assignment changed that. We had to write a thesis about a famous person, and because the professor knew that we'd pick an easy one if we made our own selections, he wrote some names on slips of paper, put them in a hat, made us draw for names. I drew Louis Sullivan.

"Louis Sullivan? Who's Louis Sullivan, I wondered. There was John L., the prizefighter . . . and the Sullivan of 'Gilbert and Sullivan.' This Sullivan, it turned out, was an architect.

"According to some experts,

Dankmar Adler wanted the Auditorium to be a "people's theater" having lots of cheap seats. In fact, "peanut gallery" seats (closed off in this photo) were considered to be the best in the house by true music lovers.

Louis Sullivan was responsible for what is known as the 'Chicago School' of architecture. Don't ask me what that means—I don't know. Sullivan designed several Chicago buildings, but two of the most famous are the Carson, Pirie, Scott store and the Auditorium building. Others, like the Garrick Theater, have been torn down.

"I'll never forget my first look at the Auditorium building. Believe me, this was *not* love at first sight. They say beauty is skin deep. The 'skin' of the building has aged for every year that it has lived and my first impression was that this was a face only a mother could love.

"But, as with all things of beauty, the more you look, the more you see to admire. The Auditorium building's wrinkles are only superficial; underneath this grey outer covering there is a real opera house. I'm told that it is acoustically perfect—I can't substantiate this claim because I have never been in the theater when anyone has been performing on stage.

"In fact, I have only been in it once, and this visit was so brief—and I was so scared—it is hardly worth mentioning. I sneaked in through a door that was accidentally left open. I wasn't supposed to go in, but I did—I just had to see the place in person; through *my* eyes, not somebody elses.

"In the moment or two that I stood on the stage I heard sounds that couldn't be measured by an engineer. They weren't sounds of the present—they were out of the past: sounds of a hundred first nights; the echoes of great orchestras; the voices of opera's immortals . . .

"Later, doing research, I learned that the Auditorium was built by the firm of *Adler* and Sullivan. Dankmar Adler, the man responsible for the acoustics, may be an unsung hero. Many people know a little something about Sullivan—if only that he was Frank Lloyd Wright's teacher—but who ever heard of a man with a funny name like Dankmar Adler?

"Wouldn't it be a wonderful twist of fate if the Auditorium was saved, primarily because of its acoustics? Perhaps, then, Adler would get his fair share of the credit.

"Adler was a remarkable man in more ways than one. In addition to the acoustics, the hydraulic lifts and other advanced stage equipment, Adler was responsible for the Auditorium's total concept: to him, it was to be a 'people's theater.' He was concerned that there should be plenty of 'cheap' seats and not too many boxes.

"If you look at photos of the 'original' Auditorium, you'll see that the first floor seats run all the way to the back of the theater. Sometime later, somebody built that horrible horseshoe of boxes blocking off half the first-floor seats. At that point, the Auditorium ceased to be the 'people's theater' as intended by its designer.

"I don't have much more to say about the Auditorium, or how I feel about it. I don't know enough about architecture to defend it for this reason, and I can only believe what others have said about its acoustics.

"So why should I care what happens to it? Perhaps because I've never had the chance to sit in a real opera house. We really don't have anything like it in Chicago now; we have movie houses, halls . . . places that accommodate anything from a dog act to ballet. I've seen ballet in the place on Wacker Drive, but it left me cold, and I don't think it was the dancers' fault. I just couldn't feel close to them.

"Is there any theater in use in Chicago now that has what the Auditorium offers: the dignity, the prestige, the acoustics, the seating capacity, the design of Sullivan, the 'people's theater' concept of Adler?

"Personally, I don't think so."

Later, after Adler's death, a horseshoe of boxes were installed thus eliminating hundreds of choice first floor seats. (This recent photo shows both galleries open.)

The cold turkey approach

There's no business like show business and in Chicago there's hardly any show business without Harry Zelzer, managing director of Allied Arts Corporation. At least, that the impression we got after talking to a few musicians and artists.

"Suppose you represent a big-name star, a ballet company, an orchestra?" a dancer speculated. "And suppose you want to bring your show to Chicago? What do you do? You see Harry. Why? Because Harry is a concert producer who has been in the business for thirty-four years and he knows what brings customers to the box office.

"If Harry thinks your show will go—that is, make money—he'll take it from there: he rents the hall, hires musicians, stagehands, ushers, writes the publicity releases, places the advertising, and sells the tickets.

Harry with Victor Borge.

"On the other hand, if Harry thinks you have a loser, you're dead, because there's hardly anybody else in town who can help you. I know, I've had plenty of arguments with him about ballet in Chicago, and I always lose."

We wanted to know whether Chicago can use another large theater—specifically, the Auditorium. And whether or not a large enough audience could be found to fill it. So we saw Harry. Who else?

That is, we saw Harry hop around his office like a man wearing hot shoes. Harry hardly ever stands still: as we talked, he stood behind his desk, walked down the hall, answered the phone, called to his secretary, checked with a girl mailing booklets, looked out the window.

How does he feel about the Auditorium?

"If they want to restore it as a monument—fine. I'll go along with that. But if they think they can make money with it, they're wrong.

"This is a unique town. We don't have the audience potential that New York has. New York has ten million people to draw on—about three million people visit the place each year. We don't have anything to compare with it. We're a big city, but we act like a typical small American town. The audience isn't here.

"In this business you have to know the angles. It's like playing roulette, a gamble. Fortunately, I've only had a few bum ones. Out of 101 performances last year, I had only two flops. That's a good record."

Harry books some big ones: Maurice Chevalier, Victor Borge, the Leningrad Kirov Ballet, Jose Greco and his dance company, in the Arie Crown Theater. His fall-winter music series at Orchestra Hall will feature the Warsaw Symphony, Artur Rubinstein, Nathan Milstein, Birgit Nilsson, the Prague Chamber Orchestra . . .

What would he book in the Auditorium?

"Ballet would be nice—recitals, opera. But they'd have to be big names, like Van Cliburn . . .

"I book ballet in the Opera House or the Arie Crown; symphony in Orchestra Hall; a pianist or violinist in Orchestra Hall.

"Right now, the Arie Crown Theater is the largest hall in town. The Opera House comes next. But for artistic shows the best place—where you can play it safe—is Orchestra Hall.

"The only way to make money with large theaters like the Arie Crown or the Opera House is to have something going in them for 365 days a year, and that's impossible.

"The only place that makes money in Chicago now is Orchestra Hall. They have a full schedule of events there. Maintenance costs are only one-third as much as the Opera House, one-fifth as much as Arie Crown. The size is right: we could use one or two more halls about the same size . . . with 1,600 to 1,700 seats."

"What if ticket prices were lowered — say, fifty-to-seventy-five cents for seats in the galleries?" we offered. "Wouldn't this attract more people?"

"Prices don't matter," he countered. "If you have a bad show, you can't give the tickets away. If you have a good show, you'll sell out."

"To be or not to be. . ."

PLAN TO RAZE THE AUDITORIUM AS OBSOLETE

New Structure to Cost $15,000,000.

Chicago's Auditorium, wonder building of the city in the world's fair year of 1893 and the earlier '90s, is to be razed as obsolete and a financial failure. In place of the building—hotel and theater—which are famous in the history of the city, is to rise a new structure towering as high as the present or future city ordinances will permit. It will cost between $10,000,000 and $15,000,000, and those who are to build are anxious to

WILKERSON NIPS PLAN TO REPLACE THE AUDITORIUM

Will Dismiss Suit for $15,000,000 Building.

Plans to tear down the Auditorium building, the famous structure long the home of Chicago's grand auditorium hotel, and he site a $15,000,000 e upset yesterday by James H. Wilkerson. held of civic and eco- ce, economic because al is put on the val- r leases, Judge Wil- the Chicago Audito- on to be without d with its announced

miss the Suit.

of his ruling, Judge l dismiss the suit association which

LEGAL TANGLE HIDES FUTURE OF AUDITORIUM

New Building Plans Off for Present.

BY PHILIP HAMPSON.

What is to be the fate of the Auditorium hotel and theater—a topic

Control of Auditorium Reported Sold to Syndicate

Announcement was made last night that a syndicate of six Chicagoans had secured control of the capital stock of the Chicago Auditorium association. 'One of the six is Attorney John F. Tyrrell, an assistant in the office of Corporation Counsel Samuel Ettleson, assigned to the police department.

is recovering in the Garfield Park hospital, where he said publicity about the Auditorium syndicate was premature and he refused to discuss it.

Charles H. Wilcox of Oak Park, president of the General Steel company, 105 West Monroe street. At his home it was said that Mr. Wilcox was in Sioux Falls, S.D., on business.

Paul J. Donavan, described as a Chicago lawyer. His name does not appear in legal or telephone direc-

Way Is Paved for Passing of Auditorium

Home of Opera to Yield to Great Hotel.

BY AL CHASE.

Replacement of Chicago's historic Auditorium theater, hotel, and office building with a modern skyscraper was practically assured yesterday when the United States Circuit Court of Appeals remanded back to Federal Judge James H. Wilkerson, the suit enjoining the owners of the property from tearing down the

SUPREME COURT DECLINES TO ACT ON AUDITORIUM

BY AL CHASE.

Taps were sounded yesterday by the Supreme Court of the United States in the famous Auditorium legal battle which has been raging in the courts for half a decade. This was effected by the nation's highest tribunal denying the petition of the Chicago Auditorium association for a re-hearing of the celebrated case

Some people said that it was because the building had settled too much and was unsafe. Others said that it was because both the hotel and theater were operating at a loss. Still others hinted that it was more than a coincidence that it all started only a year after Samuel Insull became president of the Civic Opera Association, chairman of its executive committee, chairman of its finance committee, president of its committee on management. At any rate, on Friday, February 16, 1923, the following appeared on the front page of the Chicago Daily Tribune: "PLAN TO RAZE AUDITORIUM AS OBSOLETE." The article explained that the Chicago Auditorium Association, owners of the building, were bringing suit against Willing and Studebaker estates and fifty-two others, owners of the land. The Association claimed that the building was obsolete, a financial failure, and hoped to replace it with a new skyscraper built as tall as the law would allow. It might be a hotel, a spokesman explained, or an office building, it might contain a theater . . . no one knew for sure what it would be used for.

Thus began a bitter court battle that was to last for five long years.

After two years of hearings, Federal Judge James H. Wilkerson dismissed the case on the grounds that the Auditorium building was considered as a civic project when built, and that the planned new structure was to be a purely financial venture.

That should have settled it, but the building owners were not easily discouraged. They appealed the case. Two years later,

in '27, this appeared in the Tribune: "WAY IS PAVED FOR PASSING OF AUDITORIUM." The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had sent the case back to Judge Wilkerson. Building owners now felt confident that they would win the case. Plans for the new building were altered somewhat—since Samuel Insull had announced plans for a new opera house, the new building probably would not have a theater, they said. But it would still be a skyscraper hotel, or office building.

But, come May 28, "LEGAL TANGLE HIDES FUTURE OF AUDITORIUM," an article in the Tribune, explained that the U.S. Supreme Court "refused to take any hand in the litigation."

Shortly after, in August, controlling interest in the Auditorium was sold to a syndicate made up of five Chicago businessmen. When asked what they planned to do with the building, the men refused to comment.

Two months later, a Tribune article began: "Taps were sounded yesterday by the Supreme Court of the United States in the famous Auditorium legal battle which has been raging in the courts for half a decade."

The Auditorium building was here to stay for awhile longer.

During this same five years, the theater remained in use, presenting a full-scale opera program and special productions, such as Max Reinhardt's "The Miracle."

In 1929, when Insull and the Chicago Civic Opera Company moved to the new Opera House on Wacker Drive, many plans were offered for future use of the Auditorium. It was to be turned into an office building, a new theater was to be created. On Monday, September 8, 1930, plans for converting the theater into two miniature golf courses were announced by the building owners. Here's the way the story appeared in that day's Tribune:

Transit Gloria! Midget Golf in Auditorium

(Picture on back page.)

Fore!

Negotiations have about been completed, it was learned yesterday, to install a Lilliput golf course in the Auditorium theater, 56 East Congress street, Chicago's temple of song and civic culture for 38 years.

Tentative plans of the promoters contemplate two links, one of six holes in the foyer and one of 18 holes on the main floor. On the stage will be erected a stucco replica of a country clubhouse, with veranda, and background of artificial trees, privet hedge and greensward, where hot dogs, pop and lemonade may be purchased.

Clinch Confirms Report.

R. Floyd Clinch, president of the Chicago Auditorium association, was appointed receiver for the property last February by Superior Judge Denis E. Sullivan. In a long distance telephone conversation last night from Traverse City, Mich., where he was spending the weekend, Mr. Clinch confirmed reports of negotiations for leasing the theater.

"I was approached by outsiders two weeks ago," he said, declining to give their names. "We have since had several conferences. No papers have been signed. We are still talking price. They want a lease for the winter. I think negotiations have progressed to the point where only the consent of the court is now necessary to close the deal."

Bonds of $834,000 Overdue.

When Mr. Clinch was named receiver it was announced that bonds totaling $834,000 issued 40 years ago, were due and payable, but that the association lacked the funds to redeem them.

"Opera has never paid; the Auditorium has been operated at a loss," said Mr. Clinch, but from what I hear of this midget golf thing, it will enable us to raise some much needed cash."

The promoters, it is said, expect to have both links ready by Oct. 15. The golfers will have a distinguished gallery. Looking down from the great proscenium spanning the 110 foot stage, above the proposed hot dog stand, are such figures as Gluck, Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, Liszt, Mozart, Verdi, and their peers.

Theater Opened in 1889.

These figures have seen history recorded in the noble old structure designed by Louis H. Sullivan, the architect, whose signature of the acanthus leaf is interwoven in the frescoing of the walls. They saw men and women whose names are synonymous with the city's growth present on the December night in 1889 when the Auditorium was opened.

Adelina Patti appeared that night in "Romeo and Juliet," and afterward sang "Home, Sweet Home." In the audience was "His Excellency Benjamin Harrison," as the program called him, President of the United States, and Vice President Levi P. Morton. Boxholders were the George M. Pullmans, the Marshall Fields, the Potter Palmers, the Martin Ryersons, the Lyman Trumbulls, the N. K. Fairbanks, the R. T. Cranes, the John B. Drakes.

Vanished Glories of the Past.

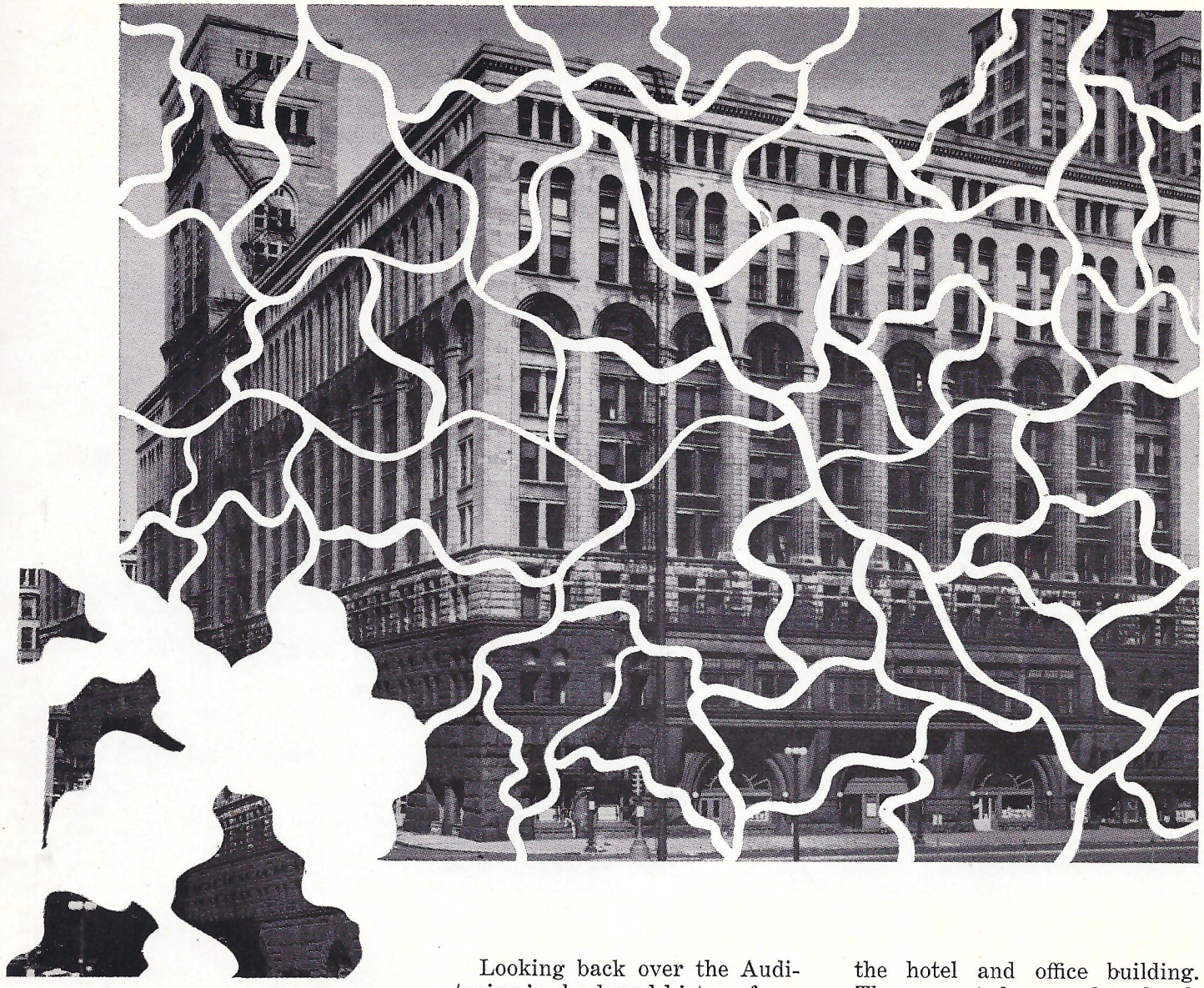
In the orchestra pit, where the ninth hole of the miniature golf course will be sunk in synthetic turf, Campanini and Polacco once waved their batons. On the stage to be occupied by the hot dog stand Garden sang her Carmen, Muzio her Aida, Marshall his Pagliacci. Challapin responded to an encore with the "Volga Boat Song." Duse was last seen there before she died.

So much for the history of the structure that in 1889 was hailed as "the world's largest theater" and in 1893 as the wonder building of the fair. It's obsolete. The old style foundation has settled 22 inches in places. The Messrs. Gluck, Handel, Beethoven et al, can say, "Art is dead; long live midget golf."

Fore!

That was thirty-four years ago. Midget golf went up like a rocket and down like the burnt-out stick, but the Auditorium still stands, needing only a face-lift to bring it back to life. *Mysteriouser and mysteriouser.*

This is as far as I can go, Jon. Can you put the pieces together?

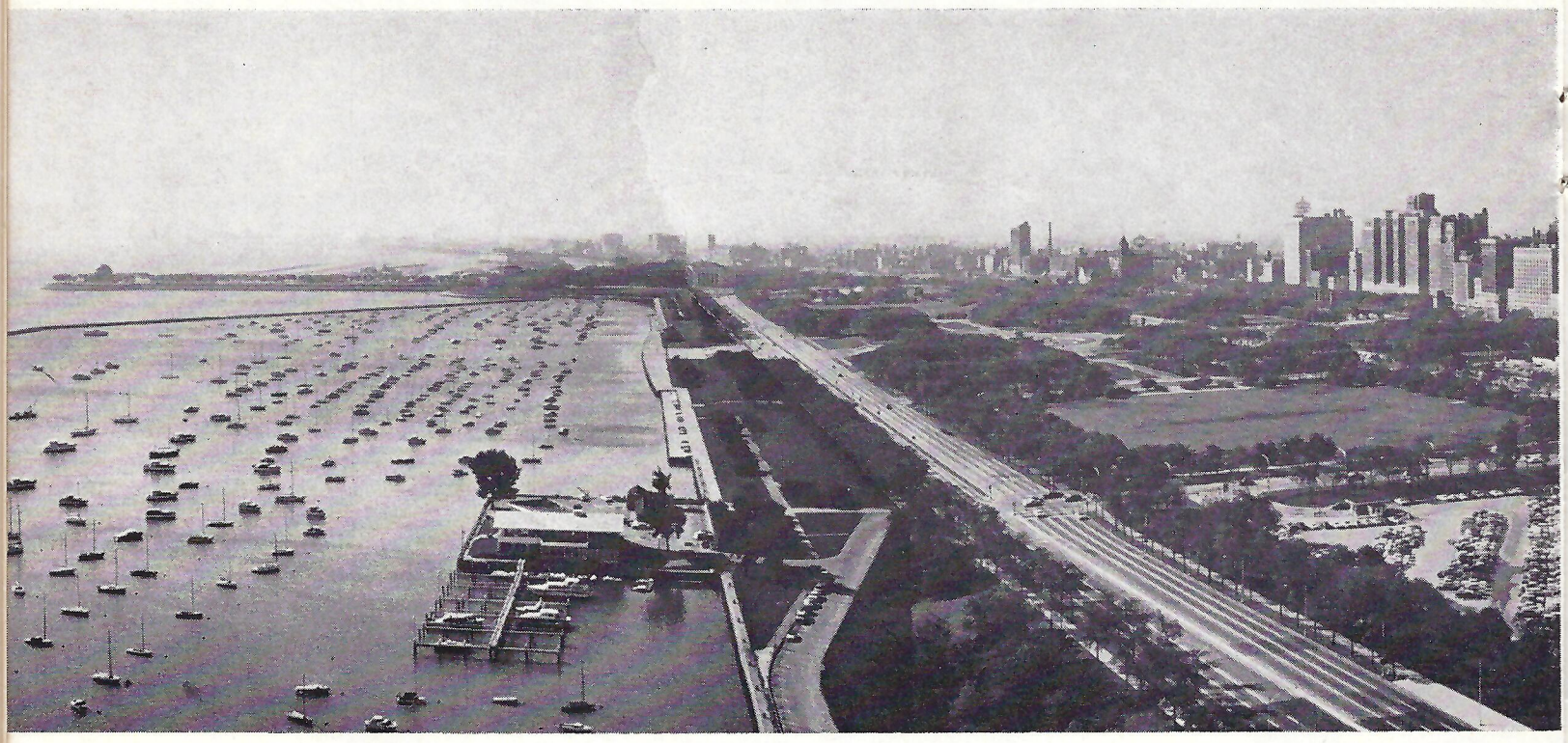


PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

Looking back over the Auditorium's checkered history from the vantage-point of 1964, we can see better what it was that Adler and Sullivan and the civic leaders of the '80's did that was eternally valid, and what it is that is worth saving now. We can also see why the great theater has survived an almost incredible series of attacks.

The civic leaders and builders of the 1880's who formed the Chicago Auditorium Association never expected their theater to make money. They were animated by pride in Chicago, not by hope of profit. Therefore they surrounded the theater with a money-maker to carry it, the hotel and office building. They executed a complete development of the whole block of land, and of all their works this has proved to be the most far-sighted. Without the surrounding structure, now housing Roosevelt University, the theater would have vanished long ago.

The whole structure has been saved from demolition more than once by its sheer massiveness, that is to say, the high cost of wrecking the building helped greatly to defeat all attempts to put the land to other uses, beginning as far back as 1923. We have reviewed some of those attempts.



Chicago's Cultural Center, September, 1964, from the Planetarium to the Public Library. This panorama is a composite of three shots taken from my front porch at 400 East Randolph Street, about 9 o'clock in the morning. J.P.

Chicago's cultural center

As this is written, our city planners have issued their latest scheme for the city of the future, with no more than a vague bow towards the idea of a cultural center somewhere in the central area. To this writer, any implied disparagement of the cultural center that has been growing for over three-quarters of a century and has already reached magnificent proportions as the result of a tremendous total investment is incomprehensible.

Chicago's cultural center has been, is, and obviously will con-

tinue to be the rim of Grant Park. It includes the Planetarium, the Aquarium, the Natural History (Field) Museum, the Grant Park music shell, (presently a weak and woefully inadequate link), Roosevelt University, incorporating the Chicago Musical College, the Auditorium Theater, the Fine Arts Building complex, including two smaller but serviceable theaters and packed full of schools of music, drama, ballet and other arts, Orchestra Hall, the Art Institute, with its associated Goodman Theater, its school and its recital hall, the central building of the Chicago Public Library, and above all, Grant Park itself, lending beauty, breathing space and unequalled accessibility to the whole complex, with its two great underground garages and a potential third that can treble the capacity of the Monroe Street parking lot while removing the only remaining eyesore in the area. There also are many clubs and fine hotels, with all their social amenities and comforts. Where else should the city's great opera house be located except precisely where the Auditorium now is?

Of course our Grant Park cultural center is unfinished, and of course millions will be poured into its further development in the next generation or two, but in view of what already exists, the idea of any other location for the cultural center of Chicago is absurd.

Eventually grand opera, the brightest jewel in the city's cultural crown, should return to Grant Park alongside the symphony, the music schools and the Art Institute, simply because it belongs there. The city's development has made its present location a blind alley.

". . . a gigantic throne, with its theaters squeezed under the seat."

INSULL'S THRONE
–key piece to the puzzle

No summary of the case for, and against, the Auditorium restoration can be complete or even adequate without at least sketching the unhappy history of the Auditorium's nemesis and only rival, the civic opera house on Wacker Drive.

The defects of that house are too well known to the city's music-loving public to need elaboration here—it is long and narrow, with bad sight-lines on the main floor, and has a sort of padded-cell sound that smothers all but the most stentorian operatic voices. The loudspeaker clusters that disfigure its proscenium aren't there for any reason but necessity, and only grand opera disdains their use.

With Insull's millions at their command, with the Auditorium at hand to copy, and undoubtedly with specific orders to surpass it in every way, how could its designers have gone so far wrong? This opera-lover has pored over that question, off and on, for over thirty years, but it took Bill Ball's interview with the old stagehand on the Auditorium stage to supply the answer. "Insull built the Opera Building because he wanted a *throne* . . . a monument."

I wasn't there, and neither was he, but he referred us to the direct evidence, the building itself. Look at our picture of it again, now. There it is, unmistakably a gigantic throne, with its theaters squeezed under the seat. The throne concept obviously dominated the entire design of the building, and the proportions of the civic opera house could be no better than the resulting space permitted. In that building, culture played second fiddle to business. It still does; the office building, recently modernized and air-conditioned, retains its rank as one of the city's finest and most magnificent.

One more aspect of the civic opera house should be analysed: its location. Insull's group did for their time, the middle 1920's, just what the builders of the Auditorium had done in the 1880's—they put their opera house where it would be most convenient for themselves.

In the '80's, Michigan Avenue was *the* fashionable boulevard, and the Congress corner was a short carriage-drive from the homes of the wealthy, then clustered on the near south side. There was no Grant Park, and the lake lapped at the IC tracks, nevertheless the lake shore, just south of the business district, was the logical place for their cultural center.

In Insull's era, however, most of the patrons of opera had abandoned not only the south side but the city; they lived on country estates, mostly to the north, northwest and west. They rode the trains to the city, and the trains they rode ran into either the Northwestern or Union stations, the city's newest and finest. What more convenient focal point existed for them than the river at Madison Street? Insull's decision to put his throne on the river made sense when it was made, but that was forty years ago. South Wacker Drive might have developed into a cultural center, but it did not. Today it is solidly commercial and its theater remains isolated from the rest of the city's cultural life. The lake front has triumphed.

A new lease on life

As Sam Insull, in 1929, was the Auditorium's nemesis, Jim Sparling, in 1947, became its saviour.

Sparling had undertaken to build an urban university in Chicago from which racial, religious and social discrimination of any kind would be forever barred. By 1947 his two-year-old Roosevelt College had a dedicated faculty, a fast-growing student body, the support of a group of influential people that included Mrs. Marshall Field, Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter Reuther and Dr. Percy Julian and a growing body of friends who believed in equal educational opportunities for all young people. The school's quarters, however, were poor and inadequate—rented space in an old office building.

As early as '46 Sparling's eye fell on the Auditorium block, grand hotel, office building, theater and all gathering dust, tax delinquent and divided in ownership among several despairing and defeated title-holders, but nevertheless the answer to his prayer.

Somehow, God and Jim Sparling only know how, Jim bought it and Roosevelt College moved in. Years later and after many struggles, the University consolidated its ownership of the entire property, land and buildings, but it has not yet been able to use the theater. However, as he told me when I first met him in 1961, Sparling fell in love with the old theater. Though some of his associates, jealous of every penny for the educational budget, regarded the theater as a millstone around the school's neck, Sparling saw that it had to become, somehow, *Roosevelt University's gift to the city.*

His chance came in 1958, and it came about because of the financial troubles of Insull's old throne at Wacker and Madison. That opera house remained a white elephant even after Lyric Opera revived the city's patronage of resident grand opera on something approaching the pre-depression scale, for the Lyric season was short, and the place attracted few other tenants. Then, in June, 1958, its new owners threw a scare into Chicago's opera patrons by turning the civic opera house into a wide-screen movie palace. While "Windjammer" played the opera house, there was newspaper-talk that Lyric might have to find other quarters, and there were no other suitable quarters—unless the Auditorium could be restored.

However, Sparling had to wage a long battle within his own organization in order to develop his idea into a sound plan that could command public support without crippling the University or diluting its own claim on the support of its friends. (It seems that every civic enterprise is plagued with similar troubles, with conflicts of interest, sometimes apparent but often hidden, with hurt feelings and clashes of temperament. Amid such turmoil I often wonder that anything gets done.)

In this case it became clear that Roosevelt University could neither raise the money to restore the theater nor run the risks of operating it when restored, nor could it assume any liability in connection with either its restoration or operation. It *could* give the *right* to restore it and to operate it, tax-free and rent-free, to a non-profit, tax-exempt and independent body organized solely for those purposes, and finally, on February 18, 1960, agreement on that solution was reached and the decision carried out.

Thus came into being, by a resolution of the board of trustees of Roosevelt University, a new body, the Auditorium Theater Council, which possesses the right to restore, operate and manage the Auditorium Theater as a civic enterprise, to raise the money for the restoration, hold it separately from all other funds and use it solely for that purpose. The Council is forever prohibited from contracting to spend money not actually on hand, and all its contracts must contain special provisions designed to protect the University, its trustees and the members of the Council from any liability arising out of the restoration or operation of the theater.

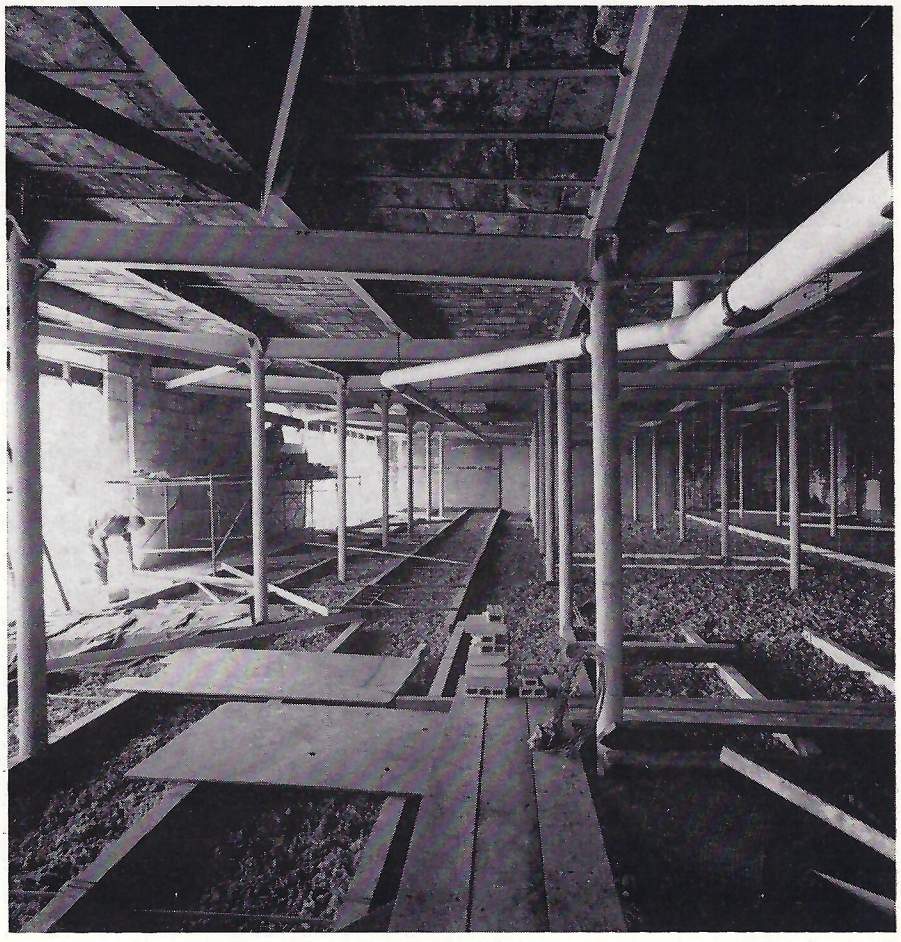
The University retains powers necessary to assure the integrity of this agreement, but the management decisions of the Council are its own.

The restored theater will pay no rent to the University for the

space it occupies, but the University will benefit substantially in other ways, from the restoration itself as well as from the joint maintenance of the building as a whole. For example, work now under way by the Council, necessary for the restoration of the stage roof, was planned jointly with the University's architects so as to make available to the University for the first time the entire eighth floor area over the stage, space sufficient to house offices now located in rented space outside the building. In this and in other joint projects of similar nature, each organization agrees to bear its fair share of the cost.

Naturally, the University expects to have the use of the theater for its major affairs, instead of renting Orchestra Hall as it now must. Jim Sparling always wanted his students to have some special kibitzing rights in the top galleries, but no agreement to that effect had been made when he retired. Doubtless his successor, Bob Pitchell, will display a similar attitude. I, for one, would like to see the Council make substantial concessions along that line when the place gets going.

On its formation, active leadership of the Auditorium Theater Council was assumed by Mrs. John V. Spachner, an able and dauntless little lady who was everybody's candidate for the job because she had just raised one hundred thousand dollars to restore Ganz Hall for the use of the Chicago Musical College. Her co-chairman was and remains Harold W. Norman, a prominent lawyer. Mayor Richard J. Daley accepted the honorary chairmanship and has continued to support the restoration project actively. Several of the University trustees, including this writer, are members of the Council, but the majority of the Council members have no connection with the University.



A dividend for the school—8th floor area over the Auditorium stage, never previously usable.

Mrs. John V. Spachner—everybody's candidate for the fund raising job.

TWO MORE HURDLES

It took a year and a half to divorce the Auditorium Theater project from Roosevelt University, create the Council, commence the fund raising and get the architectural and engineering planning of the restoration under way, and meanwhile, important things were happening.

McCormick Place, the city's new convention hall, was in the making, and the announcement that McCormick Place would contain a 5,000-seat theater, suitable for opera, concerts and all manner of spectacles put a sudden crimp in many people's enthusiasm for the Auditorium restoration. In fact this event put the Auditorium program on the shelf for all but its dyed-in-the-wool enthusiasts, until the Arie Crown Theater opened and could be tried out.

A few trials, especially by New York's Metropolitan Opera, brought the verdict: a good place to see in, but another acoustical flop, almost completely mike-dependent. One can see the live performers, but he hears only their recorded sound, so if music is his real objective, he might as well stay home and listen to records or FM. There is no intimacy between performers and audience at the Arie Crown. It is, well, an adequate convention-hall adjunct.

Across the street from Talman's office is a Catholic parochial grade-school, St. Gall's, that has a fantastic music program—it supports *three* large bands, a junior band for the little kids, a senior band for seventh- and eighth-graders, and an adult band for the rest of the parish. They need a big hall for their annual concert, so last year they abandoned their usual place, Bogan High School auditorium, and rented the Arie Crown Theater at McCormick Place. We asked the director's opinion of the change: he says they sound better at Bogan. I've heard those kids play many times in Talman's lobby, which was designed to be acoustically dead in order to swallow the noise of the tellers' machines, and even there they sound wonderful playing their annual Christmas concert for us. I think those kids deserve a chance to make the old Auditorium ring, and I want to be there when they do!

The Arie Crown hurdle explains why the Auditorium project, after getting off to a good start in 1960, languished during the next two years.

As if that were not enough trouble, the Council's own architects, a firm nationally known for their rectangular steel-and-glass boxes, threw up an even more dangerous obstacle in November, 1962, after spending $50,000 of the Council's money on research, when they raised their estimate of the cost of the restoration from the original three million dollars to four and a quarter million, with hints that even that might not be enough.

I was one of those present at a meeting of a joint committee of the Council and the university held in the architects' working office deep down in the bowels of the old theater, where I listened with first amazement, then consternation and finally anger at a sustained and bitter attack on the whole structure. With the aid of a photographic "chamber of horrors" which they had assembled, those architects tried to convince us that the building was in imminent danger of collapse; they even tried to persuade us to deny admittance to any part of the theater or stage to anyone whatsoever except themselves, lest someone be killed by a chunk of falling plaster.

It was the falling-plaster pitch that convinced me that the whole attack was spurious. We knew there were some roof leaks and that some plaster near them was wet. As a matter of fact, the roof was soon fixed, the wet plaster has long since dried out, and none is now expected to fall. Some of it will have to be patched and the entire surface may be covered with a very strong but invisible nylon mesh before the ceiling and walls are redecorated; that's all.

We know better now, but at the time of the architects' attack, almost two years ago, most of

those present were thoroughly alarmed, and after some debate the bad news of the million-and-a-quarter hike in the ante was announced to the full Council and to the public. Since the total amount of cash raised up to that time was less than the increase in the estimated cost, it amounted to an admission that the whole project at the end of '62 was farther in the hole than it was when it started in 1960. As might have been expected, many former supporters quietly withdrew, seeing no sense in throwing good money after bad, and the whole deal went back on ice.

But the Council still had money that had been given to preserve the Auditorium, and Mrs. Spachner and her remaining adherents were still determined to use it for that purpose. As I said, they fixed the roof and made some other essential repairs, and presently went about seeking new and better technical advice. That black time proved to be the final darkness that precedes the dawn, for in the summer of '63, good fortune brought Mrs. Spachner into contact with Harry M. Weese, a celebrated Chicago architect who has accomplished the restoration of other fine old buildings, including the Newberry Library, and who disclosed a great admiration for the genius of Adler and Sullivan.

Architect Harry Weese (right), chairman of the building committee, and Archie Anderson, of Sumner Sollitt, construction engineering firm, check blueprints in the Auditorium lobby.

On the right track at last

Harry Weese is an extraordinary man; when he becomes enamoured of something, he glows—he radiates. Get him started talking about the Auditorium, and though he speaks softly, with a gentle smile, you feel the short hairs rise on the back of your neck. I have never known another man to inspire faith so quickly.

Maybe he had loved the Auditorium before he learned about the awful hole that the restoration project had got into. Anyhow, on becoming aware of the situation, he decided to come in all the way—not as a professional seeking a fee but as a citizen seeking to advance a worthy cause by the gift of his best work. He became chairman of the Council's building committee, and in that capacity he undertook to reevaluate and replan the entire project on the basis of his belief that Adler and Sullivan knew what they were doing and that the way to restore their work of genius is to remove the cobbling of later, lesser men, repair only where clearly necessary and preserve as much of the original structure as possible.

So radical a departure was this from the former approach that Weese wisely sought and promptly obtained independent confirmation of his judgment from qualified consultants.

On Weese's recommendation, the Council consulted George C.

This backstage shot was taken last August when workmen opened temporary holes above the stage in order to repair a wall.

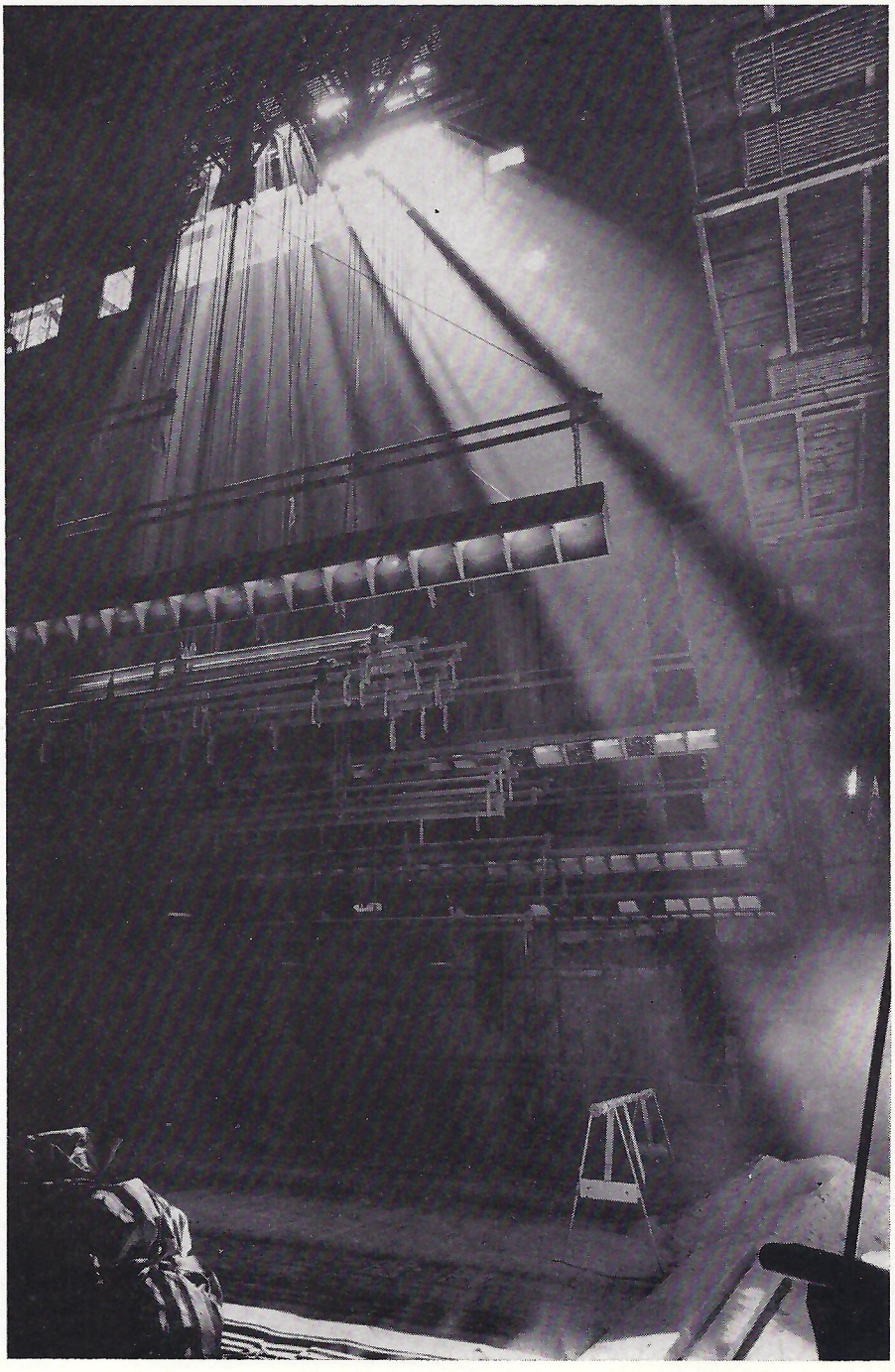
Izenour, a theater designer and engineering consultant of Yale University, and Fred N. Severud, head of a noted construction engineering firm of New York City, that specializes in theater work. These men promptly assured Weese and the Council, after a quick survey, that the stage and its equipment are as a whole sound, functional with very little work, and notwithstanding their age as up-to-date and serviceable as any operatic stage anywhere. They also recommended many money-saving techniques, ideas and materials based on their experience with other theater restorations. They concurred with Weese's view that the wooden floor decks must not be tampered with but must be repaired and preserved with greatest care as originally designed, since they are in effect the sounding-boards of a gigantic musical instrument, the hall itself.

Then Weese, fortified also with all the survey data accumulated by the original architects, set to work to replan the job and take the fat out of it.

By May, '64, the Council was able to announce that the total bill had been cut back to less than the original guess of three million, with not quite two million remaining to be raised to put the Auditorum into full operation. Also, Weese recommended immediate step-by-step construction, to the limit of funds on hand, looking to early use of the stage area, even while the house is full of scaffolding for plasterers and decorators. That work is now under way.

Public and press reaction to this good news was prompt and enthusiastic, especially among the city's music critics, all of whom know how valuable the Auditorium can be to Chicago.

As for me, I had known that better things were in the wind, and when I saw how good they were I decided that the time had come for the *whole* case to be laid before the city and that it was up to me to do it, since writing is my trade. When everyone does what he can, progress is swift.



"While taking these backstage shots, I remember thinking: 'It's been seventy-five years since sunlight last hit this stage,'" Dick Nickel recalls.

WHO WILL USE IT
–the lesson of Carnegie Hall

When New York City built a new home for its Philharmonic Symphony, at a cost many times greater than the cost of restoring Chicago's Auditorium, the Philharmonic's former home, historic Carnegie Hall, was consigned to oblivion by the talent-bookers of that metropolis. They wanted Carnegie Hall demolished because, they said, the new halls in Lincoln Center would need all the patronage the city could provide in order to pay expenses.

One of the world's great violinists, Isaac Stern, however, thought otherwise. He became the focus of a popular uprising to save Carnegie Hall from the wreckers and continue to operate it as a civic enterprise for the benefit of the music-loving public. And today Carnegie Hall, despite the loss of its former principal tenant, is busier than ever, and Stern is its president.

In a recent radio interview, Mr. Stern was asked why he jumped into that situation to save Carnegie Hall literally from the wrecking ball. This was his answer:

"Well, in the first place I was not alone. There were many people who helped out. I was perhaps instrumental in gathering them together and infecting them with the idea. I just could not see, for one thing, the one symbol that represents the United States internationally, the one buildng that we have that is part of what we call our tradition in music—you know that all over the world if an artist comes to the United States, he doesn't come to the United States to play, he's coming to Carnegie Hall, as the Europeans say, Carnegee Hall. This is to them, the meaningfulness of America.

"It's the place where all that we call our standards have been set by the triumphs and the tears and the great performances and the bad ones. And the whole rank of artists of our day for the past 72 years have come to the United States and created at Carnegie Hall what we call the American standard. It's been the source of the amalgam that has created the musical life in America. Beyond that, it has a quality, because of all this, that is not built into it—it is simply earned by its experience.

"And thirdly, I think that events today prove us—my colleagues and I who have worked on this—prove us to be right, that in a city the size of New York there is room for more than one hall—at least two or maybe three or four as time goes on. There are many more people in the city of New York and its environs who want and should be able to hear great music and at prices that they can afford to pay. To hear it in proper surroundings, with beautiful sound, and a sense of their joining in with the history of culture."

Well, in an earlier day, there was another hall in America that possessed the same sort of magical appeal: our Auditorium, and it can again serve Chicago as well as Carnegie Hall today is serving New York. Restored, it should again become the goal of the city's and the world's best new talent and the perfect showcase for the acknowledged masters when they visit our town.

Isaac Stern—focus of the popular uprising that saved Carnegie Hall from the wreckers.

That which cannot be heard from recordings

Of all the reasons for restoring the Auditorium the final, the most compelling one to my mind is that only in a hall of the size and with the acoustical quality of the Auditorium can enough people hear in their full perfection the great works of music *that cannot be adequately recorded.*

Too many music-lovers wrongly imagine that *all* music can be heard from recordings, simply because there exist records of all kinds of music. One hears only the claims of the makers of records and record-players and of the broadcasting people, and the case *against* recorded music, because of the limitations of the whole recording art, has not been stated. I propose to state it now.

The sound of many, but not all, solo human voices, and the sound of every solo standard musical instrument except the piano and the pipe organ can be recorded and reproduced on home equipment almost perfectly. Only on laboratory equipment can the recorded sound of the grand piano alone or the pipe organ alone fool the discriminating ear into believing it is hearing the real thing. Some of the greatest operatic voices, Callas's, for example, "record badly," which is to say that the recording art fails to capture them faithfully.

Small instrumental groups and small groups of singers are reproduced fairly well, but only fairly well. Even a string orchestra of thirty is reproduced fairly well. But a recording of a chorus of even twenty voices fools nobody who has ever heard the same group live. If that chorus is accompanied by a piano, organ, or instrumental group, the quality gap between the real thing and the recording is greater.

The orchestral works best recorded are things like the symphonies and instrumental suites of Haydn and Mozart—clear, clean and melodious writing for small orchestras in which the strings are seldom reinforced by more than a few woodwinds and brasses. This is eighteenth century music—much of it played and loved in colonial America before the Revolution—yet today's teen-agers eat it up on records because it sounds so clean and elegant, and also because so many of them can play it well enough to appreciate how hard it is to play very well.

That music is about the limit of complexity and dynamic range that the recording art can handle, even now.

But Bach, Haydn and Mozart and every great composer after them supplemented their orchestras with large choruses and solo voices when they wanted grand effects, and it is those grand effects that *do not record.* No matter how clean the performance, the sound comes out of the speaker-system muddy, and when you turn up the volume to match that of a live performance you get more mud!

The same thing happens with all the grand orchestral effects composed during the last hundred and sixty-odd-years—and the more players or singers the composer adds the worse is the recorded result by comparison with the live performance.

So do we define the scope of the music *that can not be heard from recordings;* it includes all powerful orchestral effects ever composed and *all* choral music ever employing the normal dynamic range of more than 20 or 25 singers, and it includes 90% of all grand opera. While saying that, I wouldn't advise anyone to junk his recordings of all this music that cannot be reproduced faithfully. I haven't junked mine; they are educational and helpful when I don't know the music well, and when I do know it well they help my imagination to recall how the music actually sounds in live performance.

Recording and broadcasting engineers, of course, are fully aware of all this. They are at eternal war with the musicians' unions because the sound people always want to use as few performers as possible for the sake of the quality of their disks or tapes, while the musicians feel they are being cheated out of their jobs. Both, of course, are right, and so the war goes on. There is only one way to produce more and better jobs for musicans, and that is to give more people the opportunity to hear the grand music in all the purity of live performance, without the interference of any electronic crutches. We need the Auditorium as Chicago's star salesman of live music. And to pack it with music-lovers we need only some intellgent salesmanship by every music-teacher and every performer of music, based on this slogan: *You haven't heard it—you can't hear it, until you've heard it LIVE.*

When the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performs Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (composed 140 years ago), it uses approximately 100 instrumentalists and 150 singers. The total cost of doing Beethoven's Ninth or any other work of like magnitude in Orchestra Hall is staggering, because of the extra rehearsal time required to unify the work of so many performers. This kind of thing anywhere is like "the

The Dick Schory group making their first recordings in the Auditorium, with never more than 16 musicians, and hardly ever all those at once. Recording specialists like Schory take care not to exceed the limitations of the recording art.

little girl with the little curl, right in the middle of her forehead." And in Orchestra Hall, which has good acoustics generally, a grand performance by 250 has to cope with one of the peculiarities of that broad, shallow stage—the performers on each end of the stage hear the sound of those on the other end of it not directly but late, by reflection around the back of the house. So they dare not listen to each other to keep together, but must ignore what they hear and work entirely by sight, from the conductor's baton. It can be done, and it is done, but it takes a lot of extra work which costs a lot of extra money.

The performance, in Orchestra Hall, can be heard by no more than 2,300 people, of whom 500, on the far sides and way down in front, will hear it raggedly or see it poorly, or both. Yet the symphony's performances of these great works are always sold out, and unquestionably much larger audiences would hear them if they could. When the Auditorium is restored, it would seem to make sense for the Symphony to double its ticket revenue and make a lot more friends by transferring their performances of these major works to the Auditorium, where 4200 people can hear them perfectly. They used to do that, even after Orchestra Hall was built.

Lyric Opera is still tied to the civic opera house on Wacker Drive by the necessity of using the scenery which the owners of that house also own. But Lyric is gradually acquiring new sets of its own, while the old ones get shabbier and shabbier. So it seems reasonable to suppose that the management of the Lyric Opera, as time goes on, will increasingly welcome the alternative that the restored Auditorium will provide for them. Meanwhile, visiting opera companies may be expected to prefer it to any other hall available.

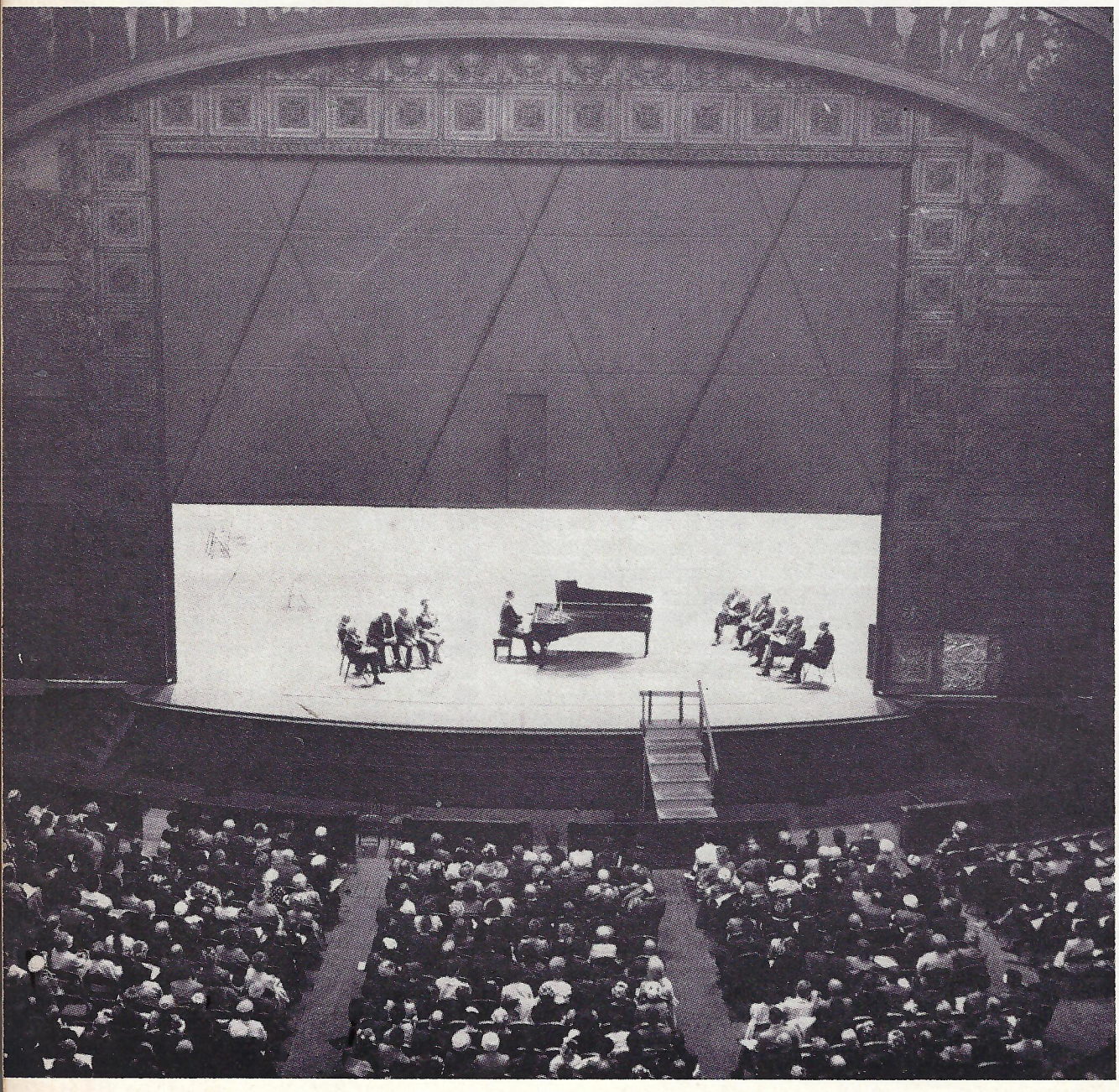
* * *

Well, that seems to be the case for the Auditorium. It is something very fine, and very useful, if the people of Chicago want to use it. In the last analysis, the culture of a city is a matter of the *people,* their interests, their activity, rather than a matter of buildings and equipment.

We of Talman have thought it worthwhile to bring this matter to the attention of the people of Chicago because we have great faith in our fellow citizens and great respect for their judgment when they are well informed.

Who cares about restoring to Chicago the world's greatest theater? Now we shall see.

When Rudolph Ganz suggested that Van Cliburn, not he, should play in the restored Auditorium, he forgot to mention that the young pianist had already played there but under different conditions. As a special favor to Mrs. Spachner and the Council, in 1961, Van Cliburn made a guest appearance in the Auditorium for publicity and fund-raising purposes. The light was dim, the theater dusty, the audience small. But according to the lucky few who heard him play that day, the music was glorious, the acoustics were perfect. And since then, Van Cliburn has been one of the Auditorium's most vigorous boosters.



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Outbuildings (garages, etc.)	1,500	**Included**
Household Contents	6,000	**35.00**
Glass coverage up to $50		**13.50**
Residence (inside)—Robbery and Theft	6,000	
Away from Premises—Robbery and Theft	1,000	**92.38**
Comprehensive Personal Liability	25,000	**47.25**
Medical Payments	500	**Included**
Voluntary Property Damage	250	**Included**
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(The New Homeowner's "Broad Form" Policy includes all the "Standard Form" policy coverage plus protection against loss caused by: water leakage from plumbing-heating systems, bursting of steam and hot water systems, weight of ice and snow, fall of trees, building collapse, damage by own vehicles, glass breakage to limit of policy, freezing of plumbing. This policy costs $151.)

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